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A YEARNING FOR WORLD PEACE

BY JAMES M. BECK,

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In discussing this question of the possibility of a just and a durable peace, if we apply the generous generalizations, that are always advanced in the discussion of the problems of war and peace to concrete illustrations in either current or past history, I think we will always find that the empirical remedies for war, whether sought by international arbitration or leagues to enforce peace, or mediation, fail in giving any final or completely satisfactory solution.

While statesmen, in their public utterances on the question, are not intentionally insincere, yet collectively every nation is more or less insincere in its protestations with respect to the subject. To confine our comments and criticisms to our own country, this nation has been the foremost exponent of the doctrine of international arbitration, and it has gone to extremes, verbal extremes, to which the responsible statesmen of no other nation have ever gone with respect to the lengths to which they would go in adjusting quarrels without resort to arms. And yet, in the Hague Convention and also in the Algeiras Convention, to participate in which we were invited by the European powers, we were quite willing to go there and indulge in an academic discussion of the possibilities of effecting a just and durable peace, but we were always careful to add the proviso that this should in no respect interfere with the continued efficacy of the Monroe Doctrine. That, of course, meant, not merely that we would not always apply the remedies which we otherwise advocated to any problem that would arise in the western hemisphere, but it also meant that we would not apply the same remedy in any European quarrel. Quite ignoring the solidarity of humanity and the fact that steam and electricity have woven the civilized world into a great organic unit, we have always, until the last few months, persistently disclaimed any legitimate standing with respect to the great questions of European politics.

So that with all our generous and eloquent advocacy of international arbitration, participation in it was always accompanied by

a very obvious and almost fatal limitation. When in England last summer, I was paid the great compliment of being invited to meet Sir Edward Grey. Of course I was very glad to go and I found this great, thoughtful, well-poised statesman quite willing to disclose his thoughts to me on a subject which was very vital and close to his heart, namely, the problem of world peace. A friend of mine in London told me that, immediately after the world war began and England entered into it because of the invasion of Belgium, he was sent for by Sir Edward Grey. When he entered Sir Edward Grey's room, he found him in tears, and Sir Edward Grey then said to him—and this was after England had issued its ultimatum to Germany—"All the dreams of my life have fallen like a pack of cards." No one who has followed Sir Edward Grey's career and who remembers the almost fatal hesitancy with which he held back his country in the matter of intervening in behalf of Russia and France will doubt that Sir Edward Grey was as great a pacifist as a statesman. In discussion with him I spoke of how wonderfully the peace of the world could be promoted if only Great Britain, France and the United States, the three great democracies of civilization, could coöperate, not by any organic alliance with Siamese-twin-like ligature, but by an *entente* by which they would pledge, not as a matter of solemn contractual obligation or with red stamps and red seals, but pledge in equity and good faith, with the moral sanction of three great and noble nations, their joint endeavors to promote peace with justice in civilization. Sir Edward Grey said to me in substance: "Mr. Beck, suppose that Great Britain would enter into a league to enforce peace with the United States," and he added, "Great Britain would gladly enter into any feasible or practicable form of coöperation with any civilized nation that would ensure peace to the world, but if we did, what reason have you to believe that the United States would coöperate and assume its share of the joint obligation and really take an active part"—of course, I am paraphrasing his words—"in enforcing that which the league thought to be just under a given state of circumstances?"

Well, that set me to thinking after I had left him, and I have thought of it very often since. Because after all, while the United States was willing to enter into very sweeping arbitration treaties—that of Mr. Bryan for example, by which a breathing spell of a year was to be given to consider the facts of any given controversy,

and that of Mr. Taft, who was willing to enter into the most sweeping obligations to arbitrate, even though questions of national honor were involved—yet be it remembered that while Mr. Bryan and President Taft were both sincere in their advocacy of their plans, it may be doubted whether, if we reduced the literal words of either plan to some concrete instance, either of them really meant what he said, because it is inconceivable that so noble and patriotic a statesman as President Taft would be willing to submit to arbitration questions which affect the honor of the country because a question that affects its honor is not a justiciable question about which men may reasonably differ. It is either some great question of national interest, which overrides all other considerations, or else it is a question where a wanton wrong is sought to be inflicted upon our country and we are asked to arbitrate whether a given nation shall inflict this wanton and deliberate wrong upon us. President Taft never could have meant, because he is too patriotic, that he would arbitrate such a question; nor did Mr. Bryan mean that if such a question arose, a year should be allowed to pass pending a discussion of the question, which would not even admit of discussion. Thus, we see illustrated the besetting sin of our public men, to say in a spirit of generous enthusiasm more than they really mean.

To my mind, the great difficulty of the whole problem lies in this. Questions are either justiciable or non-justiciable. That is a lawyer's phrase and like most lawyer's phrases, it perhaps obscures rather than illuminates thought. When we speak about a justiciable quarrel, what do we mean? We mean a question about which men may reasonably differ. It may be a question of fact or of international law. Or it may even be a question of some ethical standard not yet of sufficient universal sanction as to be embodied in that great heritage of civilization that we call international law. But in all events, it presupposes two things: first, that the question of fact or law is reasonably debatable; and second, that both parties to the controversy only want that which is just, and therefore, the controversy presents an honest difference of opinion which requires an impartial tribunal to elucidate.

Those are just the questions that generally would not result in war in any event. Because war is such a stupendous horror there is no nation, no matter what its spirit of militarism may be, that de-

sires to enter into the ordeal of battle upon a question which is merely a difference of opinion with respect to something that is debatable and which can be determined by some known standard of law or ethics.

The questions that are real subjects of war, the underlying subjects of war, are the questions which go either to national honor, because some wanton affront is about to be perpetrated upon one of two nations, or it is some great question of national honor and policy which rises so much above the ordinary conventions and standards of international law that no race is willing in such a controversy to bind up its destiny in red tape or define and limit its progress by a red seal.

Take as an illustration, the question before us in this very war. The question, primarily and on the surface, was one of international arbitration, and if ever there was a nation which, because of its advocacy for some generations of international arbitration, should have supported the theory of Russia, France and Great Britain, it was the United States. Why? Because on the surface of that quarrel, the principle of international arbitration was the immediate issue. Austria had served an ultimatum upon Serbia. Serbia had accepted all the terms of that ultimatum except two, really except one, and that was, on its face, a perfectly justiciable question—whether or not the guilt or innocence of certain Serbian officials should be determined by a mixed tribunal in which Austria should be represented, or whether it should be determined solely by the courts of Serbia.

That was a question about which men could reasonably differ. It was a question which, if referred to The Hague—an international tribunal could have been constituted—which would have taken the question out of the courts of either Austria or Serbia, and the guilt or innocence of the Serbian officials, alleged to be responsible for the murder of the Archduke at Serajevo, could have been determined by a dispassionate inquiry of an international tribunal. But that very principle of international arbitration was refused.

If that were all the quarrel, it would be plain that on the refusal of Austria and Germany to arbitrate a perfectly justiciable question, Russia, England and France determined to accept the gage of battle in order to vindicate the principle of arbitration. But after all, considered philosophically, the subject was much deeper than that.

That was the superficial cause. It was not the underlying cause. The underlying cause was that great movement of races, which moves as slowly and resistlessly as that great glacier that comes down from the dome of Mont Blanc and never ends until it touches the valley of Chamonix; and those questions of national destiny cannot be arbitrated because no nation under present conditions of thought is willing to limit by the terms of red tape or a red seal its progress, either as a race or as a nation. I do not mean to intimate that Germany and Austria were justified in refusing arbitration. The Serbian quarrel did not justify the world war.

Therefore, it seems to me that all suggestions with respect to peace may minimize the causes of war, as undoubtedly they do, and may offer the available machinery for the proper and orderly adjudication of international controversies, about which nations would probably not fight in any event, because they are justiciable, yet when great questions of national and racial destiny arise a pacific adjustment of the matter cannot be found in lawyers' agreements to arbitrate. Then unhappily follows Darwin's struggle for existence with its survival of the fittest.

The peace of the world must primarily be founded upon that which is infinitely higher than peace, *viz.*, justice in the world. There never can be a real peace without justice, and unless we first maintain justice in civilization, there will never be any durable peace. Unfortunately, temporarily or permanently, justice must often, both in the lives of individuals and in the lives of nations, be maintained by force.

I say, therefore, that the League to Enforce Peace is not a practicable way because nations diverge so greatly in their ideals and their interests, in their relative power, in their racial destiny, that any league to enforce peace would be as futile as the Holy Alliance was, though perhaps for a different reason. Such a compact would share the fate of all other leagues between sovereign nations. Sooner or later the league would break up into contending groups, and, far from minimizing war, a quarrel in such a league would tend to spread the horrors of war over a greater part of the world than would have been the case if the quarrel had simply been one between two nations.

I have no satisfactory solution to offer, because the question of peace is like the question of justice. You know what George

Eliot said in *Romola*: that justice was "like the kingdom of God: it was not without us as a fact, it was within us as a great yearning." Without admitting the application of her conclusion to the kingdom of God, yet it is true of justice. It is a great ideal, a great goal toward which we laboriously and painfully struggle through the centuries; and so it is with the peace of the world. I believe the nearest approach at the present hour towards maintaining justice in civilization, and therefore, peace—because if the forces that make for justice are more powerful than those that make for injustice, justice will be, therefore, promoted—will be for nations of kindred ideals and of kindred interests to coöperate to maintain this peace.

For that reason, I regard the great events that occurred on April 4 as the most hopeful for the human race that I have seen in my whole lifetime. I had thought that the American nation had been wrong in disclaiming any fair share of the burdens of civilization and of its portion of the collective responsibility of civilization for the maintenance of peace and order and justice, and therefore, when on April 2 the President of the United States, in that extraordinary address to Congress—one of the noblest, I think, that has come from the President of the United States in the history of our country—put aside our traditional past, forswore, in the name of his countrymen, our selfish isolation, and determined that this country should play its part and play it like a man in the great work of civilization; when, following that great event, there came facts that must powerfully appeal to the imagination of men who are not wholly destitute of imagination, when for example a Texan youth, with a flag of our country at the end of his rifle, climbed Vimy Ridge, and, with the moral sanction and authority of our government, unfurled our flag upon one of the most redoubtable strongholds of Germany in northern France, then it seemed to me that this great nation was closing one volume of its history and beginning a new one, an even more glorious one than the past, for every volume of our epic history has been more glorious than the past.

Colonial America was glorious, but it became greater when it became independent America. Independent America was great, but it became greater when under Jefferson it became continental America. Continental America was great, but it became greater

under Lincoln, when it became a consolidated and united America. It is an infinitely greater fact that, following the splendid message of the President and the concurring sanction of the Congress of the United States, in whose hands the final determination of our foreign policies must rest, this nation became cosmopolitan America.

Understand, this new volume of our history will have many dark chapters in it. Any person who thinks that the peace of the world is going to result from this war is the victim, in my judgment, of a monstrous illusion. There can never be peace in the world as long as there is hatred and injustice in the world, and this war has engendered hates of such tremendous intensity, which have gone so to the very roots of human beings, that the man is blind, it seems to me, who thinks, whether Germany and Austria win or whether England, France and Russia win, that there can ever be any good feeling between the two groups of nations in the life of this generation. Neither the vanquished nor the victors are going to be wholly satisfied, much less are they going to feel any reasonable kindness towards each other; and therefore, we are entering the most portentous, the most terrible, the most menacing half-century the world has ever known.

No human being can tell what the outcome will be. All we know now is that we are in it. It does not matter whether the traditions of the past have hitherto forbidden it. We are past that. No one statesman, no one party, not even the instinct of the people, involved us. The logic of world events drove us in, for better or for worse, and we are in for generations and centuries to come.

The only question is: what is our spiritual preparedness? How far are we ready to play a man's part in the world? Our vast wealth and resources will take care of our material preparedness, after the usual muddling which is characteristic of all democratic governments. We have too much genius and resourcefulness not to ultimately make good use of our infinite and predominant material resources. But we must consider the spiritual preparation. It is this which gives me, as one who advocated from the beginning of this world war the participation of the United States in it, the most concern. What is the response of the American people to President Wilson's noble address? Are we capable of the great destiny that is opening before us? Are we capable of playing a man's part in the most prodigious chapter of human history that is about to be written?

I read in a recent copy of the *Philadelphia Record* that in one day in this city of noble and glorious traditions and of one million and a half people there were just fifty-six enlistments, and I see that twelve thousand men attended a baseball game. In our whole country, in ten days following the inspiring message of President Wilson, there were exactly forty-five hundred recruits. If you take the full military strength of the United States, that means when the United States stepped into the most desperate conflict of history, if Germany and Austria, should they win, turn upon us, our territory, indeed, even our national existence, might be menaced. In ten days following one of the most inspiring calls to arms that this or any nation ever had, just one in three thousand military effectives enlisted.

I sometimes wonder whether the American people are not still more interested in baseball and the "movies" than they are in the European War. I think their interest in the world war has always been largely an academic one. I think they like to read about it; they find it very entertaining. I think they take a certain academic interest in thinking about the justice of its causes; but this is true, that to the great mass of the American people, the fact that this is our war, that we are as much interested in its underlying issues as any nation, has not come home to them with any overwhelming or convincing force.

About a year ago I sat at luncheon with a governor and an attorney-general of one of the great states of the Union, and I was very anxious to know what was the opinion in this state with respect to the European War. I asked the governor the question and he replied, "Well, Mr. Beck, do you want me to be entirely frank? When cotton is up, we are entirely satisfied; and when it is down, we are cross with Great Britain and its restrictions of our commerce."

I said, "Do you mean that, governor? Do you mean that in the most stupendous crisis, perhaps, the world has ever known, certainly the greatest in interest to every nation, one which is going to determine the destiny of the human race for centuries—do you mean to tell me that the sole interest in your state is measured by the price of cotton?" He thereupon turned to his attorney-general and said, "What do you think about it?" The attorney-general said, "Governor, you are entirely right. The great mass of our people are interested in the price of cotton and they are not

interested in any other phase of the war except in a purely academic way."

Before we condemn that state too quickly, let us go west of the Alleghanies and we find it the same everywhere. Since the President has committed us to the cause of civilization, since he has sounded the bugle call which should not know retreat, if we look over this vast sleeping giant of a hundred millions of people, we find it as unmoved as though a summer zephyr had passed over the waters of the Delaware—a slight ripple, but the deep undercurrents are as yet touched but little.

And therefore I wonder what will arouse us out of our dream of isolation if a great, supreme convulsion like this European War cannot? What will rouse us and how are we going to be aroused? How are we going to teach the American people the great significance of this struggle? How are we going to give them a cosmopolitan outlook? How are we going to make them feel that they are in the very heart of the world and that the Atlantic and the Pacific are nothing more than open highways over which hostile fleets could freely pass? In other words, how are we going to give this people that vision, without which it was said upon the authority of the wise man, this or any people will perish?

MORAL INFLUENCES IN A DURABLE PEACE

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To discuss the problems of a durable peace is to discuss a disease for which there are plenty of doctors but no cures. There have been many prescriptions for the perfection of peace, but in the end all seem to adopt that of Tacitus: "They make a solitude which they call peace." Somehow one comes, however reluctantly, to the conclusion that the vast chemistry of nature requires the slaughter of mankind at furious intervals, just as it seems to need the devastations of fire and flood and the cruel raids of epidemics. Guard ourselves as we may against flames from mortal causes, the lightnings come from the heavens to sere the luckless earth. We may build dams and levees with all our strength and skill, but the raindrops from heaven gather and overwhelm the help-